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DIST 11 NOVEMBER 1968

COUNTRY: JORDAN

DOI :

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND ON RECENT CLASHES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF
JORDAN SECURITY FORCES AND FEDAYIIN.

ACQ :

SOURCE :

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SUMMARY: ON 2 NOVEMBER 1968 MEMBERS OF THE FEDAYIIN GROUP "LEGIONS OF VICTORY", UNDER THE CONTROL OF TAHIR DABLAN, TURNED AN OTHERWISE PEACEFUL BALFOUR DAY MARCH INTO AN ATTACK ON THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN AMMAN. THE MORNING OF 3 NOVEMBER DABLAN AND SOME OF HIS LIEUTENANTS WERE ARRESTED. THAT NIGHT MEMBERS OF THE GROUP PLANNED WIDESPREAD RETALIATORY DISTURBANCES FOR 4 NOVEMBER. EARLY ON 4 NOVEMBER "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS ATTACKED A VEHICLE OF THE ROYAL GUARDS, AND PRECIPITATED CLASHES ON 4 AND 5 NOVEMBER BETWEEN SECURITY FORCES AND FEDAYIIN.

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AND REFUGEES. JOINT OPERATIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES (PSF) BEDOUIN TROOPS AND ELEMENTS OF THE ROYAL GUARD PUT DOWN THE DISTURBANCES, BUT NOT WITHOUT CONSIDERABLE BLOODSHED. THE LEADERS OF THE MAJOR FEDAYIIN ORGANIZATIONS, WHILE SUSPICIOUS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS, GENERALLY COOPERATED WITH THE AUTHORITIES, BUT SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS BECAME INVOLVED IN THE FIRE FIGHTS WITH GOVERNMENT FORCES. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT OTHER AND MORE SEVERE CONFRONTATIONS OF THIS TYPE WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN (GOJ) DECIDED TO ALLOW PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS TO TAKE PLACE IN AMMAN ON THE 2 NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARY OF THE BALFOUR DECLARATION, IT HAD ASSURANCE FROM THE FEDAYIIN GROUPS THAT ORDER WOULD BE MAINTAINED. IN FACT, THE SPEECHES AND MARCH WERE PEACEFUL UNTIL THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM WAS COMPLETED AND THE CROWDS HAD BEEN REQUESTED TO DISPERSE. AT THAT POINT SOME MEMBERS OF THE "LEGIONS OF VICTORY," A MARGINAL FEDAYIIN GROUP OF ABOUT 100 MEMBERS LED BY TAHIR DABLAN AND DOMINATED BY SYRIAN BA'TH PARTY MEMBERS, INCITED SOME OF THE CROWD TO MARCH ON THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. THE FIRST WAVE OF YOUNG MEN ATTEMPTING TO BREACH POLICE

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ROADBLOCKS WERE TURNED BACK. THEN SOME ARMED "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS OPENLY TOOK CHARGE OF THE CROWD AND, FIRING THEIR AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, CHARGED THE ROADBLOCKS. THE POLICE FELL BACK, AND ANOTHER ROADBLOCK WAS FORMED BETWEEN THE MARCHERS AND THE HILL ON WHICH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IS LOCATED. THE FORTY-ODD REGULAR POLICE AT THIS ROADBLOCK WERE ASSAULTED FROM THE FRONT BY THE MARCHERS AND THEN SUDDENLY ATTACKED FROM THE SIDES AND REAR BY DEMONSTRATORS ON ROOFTOPS. THIS ROADBLOCK WAS ALSO ABANDONED, AND GUARDS AT THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH EMBASSIES WERE REINFORCED. THE MOB LEFT THE ROAD AND BEGAN CLIMBING THE HILLSIDE TOWARD THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, WHILE "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS JUMPED IN CARS AND RACED TOWARD THE EMBASSY UNTIL THEY MET POLICE NEAR THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) CLOSE BY THE EMBASSY. THERE THE FEDAYIIN BEGAN ORGANIZING AND INCITING THE CROWD COMING UP THE HILL FROM SEVERAL DIRECTIONS. UP TO THIS POINT POLICE OPERATIONS HAD BEEN UNDER TACTICAL CONTROL OF AMMAN CITY POLICE COMMANDER BRIGADIER MUHAMMAD HABABIH. HABABIH WAS SLOW TO REPORT TO THE PSF LEADERSHIP THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION AND, IN FACT, ASSURED PSF HEADQUARTERS THAT HE HAD THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.

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WHEN THE MOB HAD ALREADY BEGUN STONING THE EMBASSY, HABABIH FINALLY REQUESTED THAT THE PSF BADIA DISTRICT (BEDOUIN) STRIKE FORCE BE RUSHED TO THE EMBASSY AREA. THIS WAS DONE IMMEDIATELY, BUT BY THEN THE MOB HAD STORMED POLICE LINES AT SEVERAL POINTS, BROKEN MANY EMBASSY WINDOWS, AND TORN DOWN THE AMERICAN FLAG. THE BEDOUIN, WHO WERE ALSO RUSHED TO OTHER KEY POINTS IN THE CITY, WERE ORDERED TO USE RESTRAINT AND TO DISPERSE THE MOB WITH TEAR GAS AND BATONS AND BY FIRING IN THE AIR. THIS WAS DONE, AND THE CROWD WAS DISPERSED IN ABOUT ONE HOUR WITH NO LOSS OF LIFE.

2. THE NEXT MORNING, 3 NOVEMBER, SECURITY AUTHORITIES DETAINED DABLAN AND SOME OF HIS LIEUTENANTS FOR QUESTIONING. WHILE THE EMBASSY INCIDENT SEEMED ISOLATED, POLICE REMAINED ON ALERT STATUS.

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AT ABOUT 0230 ON THE MORNING OF 4 NOVEMBER, A THREE-MAN ROYAL GUARD UNIT ON A ROUTINE INSPECTION TOUR IN A LAND ROVER NEAR "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" HEADQUARTERS,

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WERE FIRED UPON FROM THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING. THE DRIVER WAS WOUNDED AND ABOUT EIGHT FEDAYIIN IMMEDIATELY POUNCED ON THE CAR, DRAGGED THE WOUNDED DRIVER AND THE RADIO OPERATOR FROM THE VEHICLE AND BEGAN BEATING THEM, SHOUTING THAT THE ROYAL GUARDS WERE SPYING ON "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" HEADQUARTERS AND WERE PLANNING TO ATTACK ALL FEDAYIIN GROUPS. THE ROYAL GUARD OFFICER ESCAPED AND IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THE INCIDENT TO ABU NUWAR. ABU NUWAR ORDERED A SMALL CONTINGENT OF REGULAR POLICE TO RUSH TO THE SCENE, INVESTIGATE, RECOVER THE ROYAL GUARDS MEMBERS AND THE ROVER, AND REPORT BACK. SHORTLY, THIS UNIT RADIOED THAT THEY WERE OUTNUMBERED, COULD NOT COMPLETE THEIR MISSION, AND THAT THE FEDAYIIN HAD BEGUN FANNING OUT FROM THEIR HEADQUARTERS AREA AND WITH LOUDSPEAKERS WERE INCITING THE REFUGEE POPULATION TO "CRUSH THE REACTIONARIES" AND "OVERTHROW KING HUSAYN". OTHER "LEGION OF VICTORY" MEMBERS HAD BARRICADED THEMSELVES IN THEIR BUILDING AND OPENED FIRE ON THE POLICE.

3. ABU NUWAR IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED GOJ LEADERS AND OTHER SECURITY COMMANDERS AND REQUESTED PERMISSION TO SEND BEDOUIN STRIKE FORCE UNITS TO THE AREA, ARREST ALL "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS FOUND, AND RESTORE ORDER. PERMISSION WAS GRANTED AND

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Y ABOUT 0500 HOURS ELEMENTS OF THE FIRST STRIKE FORCE BRIGADE
AD SURROUNDED THE "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" HEADQUARTERS. OVER
LOUDSPEAKERS THE "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" WERE ORDERED TO DROP
THEIR ARMS AND COME OUT OF THE BUILDING. ONE "LEGIONS OF
VICTORY" OFFICER EMERGED, VERY FRIGHTENED, AND ASKED FOR A
GUARANTEE THAT IF HIS MEN SURRENDERED THEY WOULD NOT BE KILLED
BY THE BEDOUIN. GIVEN THE GUARANTEE, HE TURNED TO WALK BACK TO
THE BUILDING AND ORDER A SURRENDER. SIMULTANEOUSLY, SHOTS RANG
OUT FROM THE BUILDING, KILLING ONE BEDOUIN POLICEMAN AND WOUNDING
ANOTHER. THE BEDOUIN RETURNED THE FIRE AND THE BATTLE WAS ON.

4. WITH A RAPIDITY THAT MUST HAVE COME FROM CAREFUL PRIOR
PLANNING, "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS, PERHAPS ABETTED BY OTHER
FEDAYIIN GROUPS, ORGANIZED "SPONTANEOUS" DEMONSTRATIONS, MOSTLY
OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND REFUGEES IN MANY PARTS OF AMMAN. THE CITY
IMMEDIATELY FILLED WITH GUNFIRE, AND GROUPS OF FROM TWENTY TO
TWO HUNDRED DEMONSTRATORS BEGAN RIOTING IN VARIOUS SECTIONS OF
THE CITY. ABU NUWAR REALIZED HE DID NOT HAVE THE FORCE TO COPE
WITH SUCH A WIDESPREAD SERIES OF INCIDENTS AND, AT APPROXIMATELY
0700 HOURS, REQUESTED ASSISTANCE FROM THE JORDAN ARAB ARMY.

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AFTER SOME INITIAL HESITATION, THE ROYAL GUARDS WERE MOBILIZED AND SENT INTO ACTION. ROYAL ARMORED CORPS COMMANDER SHARIF ZAYD BIN SHAKIR, A COUSIN OF KING HUSAYN, WAS MADE OVERALL COMMANDER OF THE OPERATION, AND HE QUICKLY SET UP A JOINT COMMAND CENTER WITH ABU NUWAR. ELEMENTS OF THE ROYAL GUARDS ARMORED CAR UNITS WERE SENT TO THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH EMBASSIES. OTHERS WERE SENT TO THE JEBEL NADHIF AND JEBEL ASHRAFIAYA TROUBLE SPOTS AND TO THE REFUGEE CAMPS. THE INTENTION WAS TO SEAL OFF THE MOST TROUBLED AREAS FIRST, THEN FAN OUT AND TAKE CONTROL OF THE WHOLE CITY. ROYAL GUARDS AND PSF STRIKE FORCE UNITS WERE COMBINED FOR THIS ACTION, AND THEY COOPERATED FULLY AND EFFICIENTLY.

5. A CURFEW WAS IMPOSED AT APPROXIMATELY 0810 HOURS, UNFORTUNATELY AFTER MANY SCHOOL CHILDREN HAD ALREADY ARRIVED AT THEIR SCHOOLS. "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS FROM OTHER FEDAYIIN GROUPS, WHO BELIEVED THE "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" LINE THAT THE GOJ WAS MOVING AGAINST ALL FEDAYIIN, WENT TO THE SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZED THE YOUNG MEN FOR STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. IN MANY INSTANCES THE FEDAYIIN ENTERED SCHOOLROOMS, LEVELLED GUNS ON THE TEACHERS, AND ORDERED THE STUDENTS OUTSIDE. IN THE

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AL-HUSAYN AND AWADH REFUGEE CAMPS, WEAPONS WHICH HAD BEEN BURIED OR HIDDEN FOR MONTHS WERE BROUGHT OUT AND GIVEN TO GROUPS ORGANIZED BY THE FEDAYIIN. THE CAMPS ARE SO DENSELY PACKED, WITH SUCH A MAZE OF TWISTING STREETS AND ALLEYS, THAT SECURITY FORCES COULD ONLY CORDON THEM OFF AND KEEP THE MOBS PENNED INSIDE. AT "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" HEADQUARTERS AND IN THE CEMETERY AREA OF JEBEL ASHRAFIYA, FEDAYIIN QUICKLY GRABBED WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND PUT THEM BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE SECURITY FORCES, MAKING ANY EFFECTIVE AND IMMEDIATE ARMED RESPONSE IMPOSSIBLE. THERE ENSUED OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS A LONG SERIES OF SMALL-SCALE OPERATIONS AS SECURITY FORCES CLEANED OUT POCKETS OF RESISTANCE. "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" HEADQUARTERS WAS CAPTURED WITH MOST OF ITS FILES INTACT AND A LARGE CACHE OF WEAPONS AND MONEY. IN THE EARLY HOURS ON 4 NOVEMBER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MAJOR FEDAYIIN GROUPS, ESPECIALLY THOSE AFFILIATED WITH AL-FATAH AND THE PLO, WERE ASSURED THAT THE GOJ WAS NOT MOVING AGAINST THEM, BUT THE FEDAYIIN LEADERS REMAINED SOMEWHAT SUSPICIOUS OF THE REGIME'S INTENTIONS. HOWEVER, THEY ULTIMATELY AGREED TO HELP CALM THE POPULACE AND ROOT OUT "LEGIONS OF VICTORY" MEMBERS. IN THE EARLY PERIOD OF CONFUSION SOME AL-FATAH AND OTHER FEDAYIIN MEMBERS WERE

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CAUGHT UP IN THE SHOOTING. IN THE TOWN OF ZARQA, AL-FATAH AND PLO UNITS EXCHANGED FIRE WITH SECURITY FORCES FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS UNTIL THEY RECEIVED WORD FROM AMMAN TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOJ, WHICH THEY PROMPTLY DID. ZARQA WAS CLEANED UP A FEW HOURS THEREAFTER.

6. DURING THE FIGHTING THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME WAS NEVER IN DOUBT. THE SECURITY FORCES COMMITTED RELATIVELY FEW UNITS TO THE OPERATION AND COULD HAVE CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS VERY QUICKLY IF THE FIGHTING HAD SPREAD. NONETHELESS, SECURITY COMMANDERS WERE SHOCKED BY SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE INCIDENT AND BELIEVE THEY HAVE LEARNED SEVERAL BITTER LESSONS WHICH CONFIRMED SOME OF THEIR PREVIOUS SUSPICIONS, TO WIT:

A. THE REFUGEE CAMPS ARE FILLED WITH FULLY AUTOMATIC LATE-MODEL FIREARMS. SECURITY COMMANDERS HAD WARNED THE GOJ OF THIS FOR ALMOST ONE YEAR, BUT NO ACTION HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED.

B. A VERY SMALL FEDAYIIN GROUP WAS ABLE, BY ASTUTE PROPAGANDA, PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL COHESION, TO MOBILIZE LARGE SEGMENTS OF THE STUDENT, REFUGEE, AND PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS OF AMMAN, IN A MATTER OF HOURS. THEY HAD ALSO GAINED THE COOPERATION QUICKLY OF MANY RANK-AND-FILE FEDAYIIN FROM OTHER GROUPS.

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C. TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE INCIDENTS WAS INADEQUATE.

SECURITY COMMANDERS WERE NOT RECEIVING TIMELY OR SUFFICIENT INFORMATION REGARDING THE INCIDENTS OCCURRING IN THE VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE CITY TO PERMIT SECURITY FORCES TO APPLY SELECTIVE FORCE AT THE RIGHT SPOT IN THE EARLY STAGES. THIS MIGHT HAVE AVOIDED THE NEED FOR THE SUBSEQUENT APPLICATION OF HEAVIER AND MORE DRASTIC FORCE.

D. OVERALL CASUALTY RATES WERE HIGHER THAN THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, DESPITE GREAT RESTRAINT ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES. WHILE THE CIVILIANS WERE LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, BY REFUSING TO RESPECT THE CURFEW AND DEMONSTRATING AND FIRING ON GOJ UNITS, IT SHOWED HOW EASILY SO MANY CITIZENS COULD BE MISLED AND AROUSED. SECURITY COMMANDERS HOPE THE POPULATION HAS LEARNED THAT IT WAS TRICKED INTO COOPERATION WITH A PHONY FEDAYIIN FORCE WHOSE TARGET WAS THE GOJ, AND NOT ISRAEL, AND HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT ANY ARMED RESISTANCE WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE MET BY SUPERIOR FORCE AND THAT RESISTORS WILL FACE HEAVY CASUALTIES.

E. IF AL-FATAH AND THE PLO HAD NOT COOPERATED WITH THE**SECRET**

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GOJ, AND IF THEY HAD TAKEN UP ARMS, THE COST WOULD HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE FOR BOTH SIDES. FEDAYIIN POPULARITY IS SO HIGH THAT A VERY LARGE PORTION OF THE POPULATION WOULD HAVE JOINED THE FEDAYIIN AGAINST THE GOJ. WHILE SECURITY COMMANDERS ARE STILL CONFIDENT THAT THEY HAVE THE FIREPOWER TO BEAT DOWN THE CHALLENGE, SUCH A CONFRONTATION WOULD BE SO COSTLY THAT IT WOULD BE A HOLLOW VICTORY INDEED.

F. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE POLICE AND GUARD UNITS WHICH WERE CALLED IN RESPONDED QUICKLY AND WITH VIGOR, AND THE MAJORITY OF THE CITIZENS RESPECTED THE CURFEW AND REMAINED PASSIVE. COMMANDERS BELIEVE THIS RESPONSE DISPROVES ALLEGATIONS THAT SECURITY FORCES AND CITIZENRY WOULD DESERT THE GOJ AND THE HASHIMITE REGIME IN ANY CRISIS.

7. SECURITY COMMANDERS BELIEVE THERE WAS A CERTAIN INEVITABILITY TO THIS CONFRONTATION. THEY HAD BEEN WARNING FOR OVER ONE YEAR THAT LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION OF THE ARAB/ ISRAELI PROBLEM WAS CAUSING A STEADY DETERIORATION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE EAST BANK. THE FEDAYIIN WERE ATTRACTING MORE AND BETTER MEMBERS; THE GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING VIRTUALLY NO ACTION TO INHIBIT THE FEDAYIIN; AND A

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SPIRIT OF HOPLESSNESS WAS INFECTING THE PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH THEY HATE TO SAY IT, MOST SECURITY COMMANDERS BELIEVE THAT IF THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE, THE EVENTS OF 2-6 NOVEMBER WILL BE ONLY THE OPENING ROUND OF WHAT COULD BE A SERIES OF BATTLES WHICH COULD RESULT IN JORDAN'S ULTIMATE SELF-DESTRUCTION.

8.

COMMENT:

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ARE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR VIEW THAT ABU NUWAR IS TOO WEAK TO HOLD SUCH AN IMPORTANT POST. IF THE KING SHARES THESE VIEWS IT IS POSSIBLE HE WILL REPLACE ABU NUWAR IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ANOTHER

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HE BEDOUIN STRIKE BATTALIONS FROM THE PSF TO THE ARMY.
IF THIS WERE DONE ABU NUWAR'S CHANCES OF REMAINING PSF CHIEF
WITH ONLY SIMPLIFIED POLICE ROLE WOULD PROBABLY BE IMPROVED.)

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